

RED THREADS

Bound #2 Artwork by Associate Professor Beili Liu

Newsletter for the Center for Asian American Studies

"An invisible red thread connects those who are destined to meet, regardless of place or circumstances. The thread may stretch or tangle, but will never break."
—Chinese Proverb



Prof. Amber Abbas with Ali Khataw at the Austin History Center reception. Photo copyright Yvonne Lim Wilson, AsianAustin.com

A Journey into South Asian America

I did warn them. I warned my students on the first day of class that it would be a lot of work. But they stayed. They stayed to discover who South Asian Americans are, what their migration was like, how they have sought out a unique place in American society, what they love, fear, and expect. They stayed perhaps because they recognized the importance of studying the cultures and histories of others, perhaps because they were intrigued by the final oral history project, or (honestly) perhaps because they just needed another class. The group of 23 students who stayed for the course I taught called "South Asian Migration to the U.S." embarked on a journey that began with reading about migration and ended with the creation of primary sources of historical investigation that will have a second life in two Asian American archives.

The idea for a class on South Asian America had been germinating in my mind for several years before I got the opportunity to teach it in Fall 2011. The Center for Asian

American Studies gave me a place to explore my growing interest in South Asian America, a field that continues to develop as a part of Asian American Studies more broadly. South Asians are a rapidly growing community in the United States; the last census recorded a population of 2.8 million. And yet, they remain hidden under labels and stereotypes that mask the diversity of the many communities they represent.

To explore these complexities more deeply, I designed a course called "South Asian Migration to the U.S." and embarked on a semester of study with twenty-three UT students. I was amazed to discover what a diverse group of students were attracted to the topic—even if several of them admitted they didn't really know who South Asian Americans were!—and found the same high levels of engagement from students of South Asian descent as well as those from other backgrounds, East Asian, Mexican, African and European. The melting pot of our classroom

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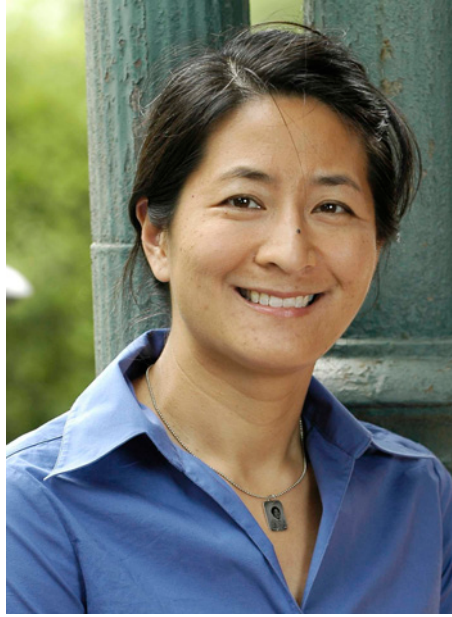
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Center for
ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Message from the Director



Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Texas presents one of the last, great frontiers for institutionalizing Asian American Studies in a Midwestern and southern state that is home to the third largest population of Asians in the United States. This rapidly growing, increasingly civic minded community of largely post-1965 immigrants infuses The University of Texas at Austin with about 18 percent of its undergraduate population, whose high visibility and multifaceted whirlwind of campus activities through some 100 student groups mirrors the growing presence and integration of off-campus community organizations and advocates.

Drawing upon these resources, not the least of which is our base in the internationally renowned University of Texas, the Center for Asian American Studies (CAAS) is striving to spearhead the development of Asian American studies research focusing on Asians in the south through programs such as hosting the 2010 Association for Asian American Studies annual conference, developing an MOU to help the Vietnamese American Heritage Foundation digitize and archive its oral history collection at UT, and partnering with the Austin History Center (AHC) through classes such as "South Asian Migration To US," taught by graduate student Amber Abbas, which trained students to collect oral histories of Asian Texans that were then archived at AHC and online at the South Asian American Digital Archive.

Not the least of our challenges includes raising awareness of the vast ethnic and socioeconomic heterogeneity of Asian Americans in ways that would reveal the subtle

racism imbedded in our "model minority" image. Directing attention to social problems such as the pressures of refugee legacies, high levels of mental health crises such as suicide and depression, and discrepancies between high educational attainment and limited trajectories in employment reminds us that Asian Americans have yet to stand on equal ground in the United States. This educational project targets not just outsiders, but Asian Americans as well, many of whom do not understand much less embrace the histories and conditions that give us common ground to fight for social change.

CAAS strives to fulfill the potential of Asian Pacific Americans in Texas despite ongoing cuts which have slashed our operational budget by 25 percent over three years and losses of faculty to other institutions. We have embarked upon a strategic planning process including representatives from faculty, UT staff, and APA community leaders to help us assess our priorities and goals, resources and constraints, in order to produce a realistic plan to becoming a leading center for knowledge production and programs representing the richness of Asian experiences in the American south. This project is advanced in no small way by supporters such as the Honorable Martha Wong, who has funded an endowment of \$50,000 to foster Asian American studies at UT. We are deeply grateful for her generosity, leadership, and vision.

In addition to our annual printed newsletter, look out for our new e-newsletter at the end of each fall and spring semesters with more updates and information regarding CAAS programs, achievements, and events pertaining to Asian Pacific American affairs.

Sincerely,

Madeline Y. Hsu
Director, Center for Asian American Studies
Associate Professor, Department of History

Madeline Y. Hsu

Ph.D. | Director
myhsu@mail.utexas.edu
512.332.9649

Sona A. Shah

M.A.
Program Coordinator
sona.shah@austin.utexas.edu
512.232.9468

Teresita Gonzales

Administrative Associate
teresita.gonzalez@austin.utexas.edu
512.232.6427

Center for Asian American Studies

Geography (GRG)
Building, Suite 220
General Inquiries: aas@
austin.utexas.edu
Phone: 512.232.6427
Fax: 512.232.7136
<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/aas>

A Journey into South Asian America (cont.)

shed light on the value of exploring other cultures and histories, and as we worked to build a strong sense of community in the classroom, the students were preparing to take this energy outside its walls.

The final assignment for the course, which counted for 40% of their final grade, was to conduct and record an oral history interview with a South Asian migrant to the United States, to transcribe the interview, and finally to write an analytical essay about the experience that engaged with the themes and literature we had studied in the course. Though the transcription took the longest, the hardest part was finding someone to interview. For many students, this meant moving beyond the comfort zone of UT's boundaries, beyond their own groups of friends and students, going out into Austin and other places in Texas to speak with someone else about their personal experiences. One student went to the Austin Hindu Temple to find a narrator, and said he felt like he was asking someone out on a date! Then, after finally finding a willing narrator, the students devised a questionnaire and set off to do their investigating.

What they found was an incredible diversity of experiences. Their narrators encompassed much of the diversity of South Asia and South Asian America, representing various countries: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka; as well as language groups: Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Malayalam, Sinhalese, Kannada, Bengali and Punjabi; and religions: Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and Christian. The narrators told stories that emphasized their business experience, their education, the importance of their children, the loss of home, the search for belonging, the conundrum of returning to a "home" where they now feel like strangers and the challenges of raising families in a new "home." These stories expose the limitations of the stereotypes of South Asian Americans as doctors or convenience store owners, as a "model minority" characterized by easy assimilation. Rather, they show the texture of lived experience and remind us of the importance of good research.

As the field of Asian American Studies continues to grow, and South Asian American Studies develops with it, the work that the students did for my class is becoming part of a body of documentation that allows us to explore the changing faces of America in the twenty-first century. On April 17, 2012, the Austin History Center (AHC) welcomed the deposit of seven student-conducted interviews into their Asian American collection. These interviews represent some of the stories collected in Austin and are the foundation of the South Asian American Oral History collection. During the reception that the AHC hosted to launch the collection, several students and narrators commented on what the project meant to them. It allowed

WHO WE ARE — Founded in 2000, The Center for Asian American Studies (CAAS) is at The University of Texas at Austin is an interdisciplinary academic program promoting understanding and awareness of Asian Pacific American (APA) issues and communities. We house undergraduate major, minor, and honors programs and organize lectures, films, conferences, speakers' series, discussion forums, and collaborate partnerships with community and campus organizations. CAAS seeks to develop and highlight transnational and hemispheric perspectives and narratives of Asians in the Americas and the American South.

students to engage in an active way in their communities, to deepen relationships with relatives, to understand their own history and the history of Austin through the eyes of people whose lives are both ordinary and extraordinary.

Another twelve interviews will soon be posted in the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) online at www.saadigitalarchive.org where they will be available, open access, to both researchers and the public who may be interested in deepening their understanding of the experience of South Asian Americans. This archive is designed to capture the stories of South Asians in America, to understand the past and its importance in shaping the future. The student-conducted oral histories will form a significant addition to SAADA's collection, as the site becomes a central location for those researching South Asian America.

It is not often that work for a class can become the source for writing new histories, but those students who stayed, who completed the journey into the heart of South Asian America and back again, have now discovered the importance of historical work, and what it can mean to their community.

Amber Abbas was an Assistant Instructor for CAAS in Fall 2011. She received her Ph.D. in History from The University of Texas at Austin in Spring 2012 and will be starting as an assistant professor at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia Fall 2012.

Core Faculty

Madeline Y. Hsu
Associate Professor of History

Julia H. Lee
Assistant Professor of English

Nhi Lieu
Assistant Professor of American Studies

Madhavi Mallapragada
Assistant Professor of Radio-Television-Film

A. Naomi Paik
Assistant Professor of American Studies

Snehal Shingavi
Assistant Professor of English

Eric Tang
Assistant Professor of African and African Diaspora Studies

CAAS Scholarship Recipients

CAAS provides scholastic awards for exceptional students who have furthered the promotion of research, service, and academic involvement, which is imperative for the growth of Asian American Studies. This year CAAS awarded the following students and organization.



CAAS Director Madeline Hsu with Kye-Hyoung Lee, Graduate Research Award Recipient at GraduAsian (Photo copyright Quit Nguyen)

Graduate Awards

KYE-HYOUNG LEE

Ph.D. candidate in Higher Education Administration

Lee's research will examine factors that would affect the formation of Asian American 9th graders' educational aspirations as well as how aspirations are different by Asian American ethnic subgroups. Her research will be a quantitative study by analyzing a dataset called the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09), which was released by the National Center for Educational Statistics. The findings will help to understand Asian Americans' educational aspirations, specifically how they vary by ethnic subgroups, and will allow educational administrators and policymakers to focus more attention on Asian American students

YISHAN SHEN

Ph.D. candidate in Human Development & Family Sciences

Shen is interested in ethnic minority adolescents' acculturation, parent-child relationship, and their developmental outcomes. Currently, her project is focused on Chinese American adolescents' language brokering experience and how it relates to their psychological adjustment in the context of family relations.

Undergraduate Research Award

TU-UYEN NGUYEN | Classics & Asian American Studies

In the spring semester Nguyen took Professor Sharmila Rudrappa's course, Sociology of Race and Work. This was her first course in the Asian American Studies major so the research paper she submitted marked a turning point in her personal understanding of American history surrounding employment, immigration, citizenship, and gender. In her fourth paper for the course, "Socially Constructed, Economically Maintained: The Gender Divisions of Labor," she tried to understand how the social and economic structures in American society are conducive to gendered and racial stratification in the work force.

Student Organization Award

INDIAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION

An already active presence on campus, ISA plans to use this award to continue hosting social, cultural and philanthropic events for the upcoming years. Their signature events are National Gandhi Day of Service, The ISA Shaan Awards and Taal Talent Show. They hope to host these events in the future to continue serving the community.



CAAS Director Madeline Hsu Tu-Uyen Nguyen, Undergraduate Research Award Recipient at GraduAsian (Photo copyright Quit Nguyen)

Asian American Studies Graduates

Congratulations to our majors graduating from The University of Texas at Austin!

Marisel Agtural

Michelle Davis

Rachel Gounder

Jamie Lee Helton

Stella Sheng Lillie

Amy K. Rattananinad

Read-in Against the Banning of Ethnic Studies Books

by Snehal Shingavi



Dennis Gonzalez, program coordinator at UT's Multicultural Engagement Center, tabling at the event.

On February 29th, the Center for Asian American Studies in conjunction with faculty, staff and students from all across the university, participated in a "read-in" in solidarity with educators and students in Arizona who were protesting the decision of the Arizona state legislature to ban the use of certain books in the state's ethnic studies courses.

Despite the rain, some 100 people participated in the read-in throughout the course of the day, where individuals read passages and excerpts from many of the books that had been banned in Arizona: James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, Sandra Cisneros's *Woman Hollering Creek*, and Howard Zinn's *The People's History of the United States*. The point of the read-in was to draw attention to the value and importance of these and other ethnic studies textbooks for a fuller understanding of American history.



Professor Snehal Shingavi with undergraduate students at the February 29th read-in at UT Austin

While Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) officials claimed that the books were not officially banned, a wide range of texts were collected and ordered removed to a district storage facility, and former Mexican American Studies teachers were barred from using the texts in the classroom. Arizona Ethnic Studies Network believed that the decision to prohibit teachers from using the texts resulted in a de facto ban on these books, which meant that further restrictions on free speech and academic freedom were also possible.



A UT faculty member reading from one of the books banned in Arizona's ethnic studies courses

The Feb. 29 event at UT Austin campus was part of a national read-in held in support of "ethnic studies, critical pedagogy and thoughtful education." Teachers, civil rights activists and authors from across the country strongly criticized the passage of Arizona House Bill 2281, which led to the shutdown of the TUSD Mexican American studies program in January.

Part of the reason that the event was successful has to do with the legacy of ethnic studies programs on American college campuses. These programs were largely won in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the absence of historical explanations for the experiences of ethnic minorities. Now, under the face of budget cuts, these programs are under threat and in many instances at risk of disappearing all together.

Student groups and Centers that supported the Read-In included: La Colectiva Femenil, Asian Desi Pacific Islander Collective (APAC), Longhorn American Indian Council, Students for Equity & Diversity, Queer People of Color and Allies, the Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS), Center for Asian American Studies (CAAS) and Center for Women & Gender Studies (WGS).

Faculty and Staff Notes



CAAS core faculty and staff get together at long-time CAAS staff member Barbara Jann's retirement dinner in August 2011.

AMBER ABBAS graduated from The University of Texas at Austin's Ph.D. history program in May 2012. Amber is moving to Philadelphia this summer to start her new position as assistant professor in history at St. Joseph's University this fall. Abbas taught the Asian American Studies class "South Asian Migration to the U.S." in fall 2011 and will continue to develop her work with the South Asian American Digital Archive and other Asian American faculty in the Philadelphia area.

ALEXANDER CHO was selected as a 2012 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Summer Fellow. For this fellowship, he spent a week at the campus of Microsoft Research New England in Cambridge, MA presenting original research on racialized aesthetics and language used by young people on social network sites. He spent this summer continuing his appointment as a Graduate Research Assistant on the MacArthur Foundation-sponsored study "The Digital Edge," part of the Connected Learning Research Network, which focuses on issues of equity in

digital media access and learning opportunity in Austin-area schools. In addition to teaching for the Center for Asian American Studies, Cho spent this past year successfully completing his qualifying exams, formalizing his dissertation committee, and drafting his dissertation proposal, which he will defend in Fall 2012. His dissertation is an anthropological study of how young people use digital and social media, with particular attention to issues of the intersection of LGBTQ identity and race.

TERESITA GONZALEZ joined CAAS in February 2012 as the new administrative associate. She replaced long-time staff member Barbara Jann who retired in August 2011.

MADELINE Y. HSU is currently working on, "Strategic Mobilities: Immigration, American Foreign Policy, and Chinese Intellectuals during the Cold War," a monograph exploring the intersection between American diplomatic efforts and immigration laws and practices concerning Chinese intellectuals that contributed to late twentieth century

ideologies and structures of race and inequality concerning "model minorities." Her article "The Disappearance of America's Cold War Chinese Refugees" is in the Summer 2012 issue of the *Journal of American Ethnic History*. The Association for Asian American Studies awarded an honorable mention to an anthology, *Chinese American Transnational Politics*, by Him Mark Lai (University of Illinois Press, 2010), which she edited and introduced.

RAMEY KO, continued to serve as a member of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders, part of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders. During the two years since the Advisory Commission was formed, staff and commissioners held over 200 public events in more than 20 states and spoke in person to over 20,000 people, not to mention dozens of conference call trainings and webinars on topics ranging from qualifying as a federal contractor to nail salon worker safety to student loan workshops for college students and recent graduates. Ko also serves as board member of

Faculty and Staff Notes

the national non-profit organization Asian Pacific Americans for Progress, where he worked with CAAS to host a local event in Austin on June 23, 2012, as part of a national town hall on civil rights, bullying, and hate crimes entitled "Vincent Chin 30: Standing Up Then and Now." Austin was one of over 35 cities that participated. Ko regularly teaches "Asian American Jurisprudence" for CAAS.

JULIA H. LEE published her first book *Interracial Encounters: Reciprocal Representations in African and Asian American Literatures, 1896-1937* (New York University Press, 2012). She won the Raymond Dickson Centennial Endowed Teaching Fellowship this year from the College of Liberal Arts, which is for excellence in undergraduate teaching. Lee has also been elected to the executive committee for the Modern Language Association's Division on Asian American Literature in 2012 for a 3-year term.

NHI T. LIEU was invited to give talks on her first book, *The American Dream in Vietnamese* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011), at the Universities of California at Irvine (UCI), Los Angeles (UCLA), and Davis (UCD). For Spring 2012, she was a University of Texas Humanities Institute Faculty Fellow. She received a Special Research Grant to conduct research on Asian immigrant bridal salons and fashion and beauty in photography. She presented her findings at the Gender Symposium sponsored by the History Department and the Chao Center for Asian Studies: Asian Studies Southern Consortium. Watch for her forthcoming article, "Beauty Queens Behaving Badly: Gender, Global Competition, and the Making of Post-Refugee Neoliberal Vietnamese Subjects," in a forthcoming issue of *Frontiers: A Women Studies Journal*.

BEILI LIU, CAAS faculty affiliate in the College of Fine Arts, has held several solo and group exhibitions this past year in the US and internationally. Some galleries include the Hua Gallery in London, Vessel Gallery in Oakland, CA and Galerie An Der Pinakothek Der Moderne in Munich, Germany. She's received several honors and awards including: the Walter and Gina Ducloux Fellowship, College of Fine Arts, University of Texas at Austin; Distinction Award, Kaunas Biennale, TEXTILE 11,

Kaunas Lithuania; Austin Critics Table Award: Outstanding Artist; and the Austin Critics Table Award: Out Standing Works of Art: Installation

A. NAOMI PAIK received two fellowships, the Early Career Postdoctoral Fellowship from the Humanities Center at The University of Pittsburgh and the Postdoctoral Fellowship and The Bill and Carol Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry from Emory University. She accepted the former and will be working on her book manuscript in Pittsburg for the 2012-13 academic year.

ALISA PERKINS is a doctoral candidate in anthropology who successfully defended her dissertation in April 2012. Her dissertation, entitled "From the Mosque to the Municipality: The Ethics of Muslim Space in a Midwestern City," was based on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork carried out between 2007 and 2009. The project was funded with support from the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and the National Science Foundation. Perkins teaches "Muslims in America" for CAAS.

SHARMILA RUDRAPPA's article "India's Reproductive Assembly Line" is featured on the cover of *Contexts*, a quarterly magazine that makes sociology interesting and relevant to anyone interested in how society operates.

SONA A. SHAH joined CAAS as the program coordinator in August 2011. This past year she has served on the Network for Asian American Organizations board of directors representing CAAS. In the upcoming year she will continue to serve on NAAO and has been elected as an officer to the Asian/Asian American Faculty & Staff Association at UT-Austin. She has also been invited to serve on the Gender and Sexuality Center's advisory committee.

SNEHAL SHINGAVI received the RAISE faculty award for his tremendous success in balancing his academic research and teaching with social justice activism. The RAISE Excellence Awards is hosted annually by the Asian/Asian American Faculty and Staff Association and the Asian Desi Pacific American student group to celebrate excellence in the Asian/Asian American community at UT-Austin.

LOK C. SIU is leaving her position as associate professor in anthropology and Asian American studies at UT Austin for a new position as associate professor of Asian American and Asian diaspora studies in the Department of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley. This past year Lok served on CAAS's strategic planning committee to help create a long-term plan for CAAS's future direction. Her friends and colleagues at UT will dearly miss her!

ERIC TANG's article, "A Gulf Unites Us: The Vietnamese Americans of Black New Orleans East," was in the spring 2011 *American Quarterly*. He has taken on the role of an op-ed contributor to the *Austin American Statesman* where he has written about Jeremy Lin, affirmative action and racial inequality in Austin.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE HONORABLE MARTHA WONG

CAAS is excited to announce that Dr. Martha Wong has graciously started an endowment for CAAS to fund student scholarships. Martha's pledge of \$50,000 will ensure CAAS's existence at UT-Austin despite budget cuts. Dr. Wong says about her gift, *I wanted to give back to the University of Texas, where I learned so many things and met many great friends. I gave to the Center for Asian American Studies because I believe that more research needs to be conducted about Asian Americans in the South and the center is so important to record Asian American contributions and history. I have fought for this center in so many different ways and want to ensure its continuance!*



B.A. Student Profiles



JULIAN JOSEPH In Fall 2012 I will be starting my 6th and final year at UT Austin. I switched to Asian American Studies my 3rd year after two frustrating years in Electrical Engineering. I made the switch because after a few years of low grades and a constricting course load, I realized that I needed something that I was interested in but would allow me to explore much more than my basic requirements. Besides Asian American issues, I'm quite interested in entertainment media. The flexibility of Asian American studies has allowed me to complete UT's audio recording program in the School of Music and the robotic lighting program in the Department of Theatre and Dance, as well as take several video editing classes on the side. Furthermore, I've been able to dedicate ample time to extracurricular activities such as serving in the youth ministry at my local church and working 20 hours a week as a team leader for 5 years at my on campus IT job.

Besides the diversity it has afforded me, the program itself is perhaps the most diverse in terms of focuses at the University. Cross-listings of Asian American studies classes with different departments have allowed me to take courses in a range of subjects including: Asian American psychology, Asian American film history, Japanese popular culture, Taiwanese history, and many more. This year I look forward to taking classes focused on Asian American/African American relations and Asian American law. All of this being taught by a top notch faculty that hails from universities like Stanford and Harvard, yet still takes the time out of the day to invest in personal relationships with students, and you've got one heck of a program. Asian American studies is an emerging field. It's small enough today that anyone who contributes to it is sure to make their mark. However, over the next decade those contributions will only grow in importance as Asian American issues increase with the population percentage. For me, I've already seen how Asian American studies has played a positive impact in my

daily life. Reading *The Joy Luck Club* first grabbed my attention in high school and helped me understand the complex relationship and viewpoints between first and second generation immigrants. This interest was solidified during my Asian American film history class where only half the people raised their hand when asked if they had heard about Japanese Internment in high school. Now when I visit places like the Japanese American History Museum in LA or Hiroshima, Japan, or when I counsel Chinese-American children at my Asian American church, I am well-equipped to see things from multiple perspectives that many are not privy to. Though many do not see me and instantly think I am Asian American, an Asian American studies class influenced me to write a paper that challenges that and affirms my high-school friends slogan for me: "50% black, 50% white, but 100% Asian."



NIKKY MARIE BISSONNETTE I first became interested in Asian American Studies after I took "Introduction to Asian American History" course to fulfill my history credit. I didn't want to learn the same American history that I had been taught and re-taught over and over again before I came to UT Austin. The Intro class was the most refreshing course I had ever taken. Being forced to learn American history through an entirely new lens sparked such an interest in me that I decided to pursue a second major in Asian American studies. One of my favorite things about being an Asian American Studies major is the ease of conversation with professors. Since the classes are relatively small, it's effortless to get to know the professor. This is a huge contrast to my other classes. Every AAS class I take continues expand my understanding of more than just Asian American Studies and have helped me in my personal and academic life. My primary major is art history, and I've been able to apply the lessons I've learned through my Asian

American Studies classes to major topics in art by Asian Americans. This category of American Art has only recently gained curiosity. After I graduate, I plan to explore this specific niche of art and increase interest in the preservation and study of it. My role in the Asian American community on campus has been limited, but I plan to become much more involved, especially with student outreach.



AMY K. RATTANANINAD Like many students, I entered college not knowing what I wanted to do in life. But I did know what I wanted to learn. I wanted history relevant to me - to my experiences as a daughter of Thai immigrants, and my life as a woman of color in a society that has all but forgotten that this is a nation of immigrants and foreigners, a nation built upon colonization and genocide of indigenous peoples. When I realized how many histories had been distorted, absent, or undermined in public education—and in public knowledge in general—I began my venture into ethnic studies classrooms.

I came into The Center for Asian American Studies after learning about the "UT 10," where only thirteen years ago, students fought to win Asian American studies at UT Austin, just as students had fought in the 60's and 70's to win African and African diaspora studies and Mexican American studies. Now our generation faces dangerous threats to the knowledge and histories offered by ethnic studies programs, from HB2281 in Arizona, legally banning ethnic studies, to ongoing budget cuts in Texas. CAAS has given me an education I can take back to my community, an education that spoke to my own history, an education that taught me lessons in community building, struggle, and organizing. It is not debt, austerity, and crisis that will define this generation, but the common struggle for a better, more equitable future because, after all, you get what you FIGHT for.

A Visit from CAIR-Houston

by Alisa Perkins



CAAS core faculty and staff get together at long-time CAAS staff member Barbara Jann's retirement dinner in August 2011.

During the spring semester, the Center for Asian American Studies was pleased to welcome Mustafa Carroll, Executive Director of The Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) Houston. Mr. Carroll visited campus to provide a lecture for students in the Asian American Studies class, "Muslims in America," which was opened up to the entire UT campus for the occasion. His visit was hosted by the Center for Asian American Studies in conjunction with the College of Liberal Arts.

CAIR is a Washington-based advocacy and civil liberties organization for Muslims in America founded in 1994. Over the past several years, Mr. Carroll has worked with CAIR both in its Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth branches. CAIR is a pro-active organization that arranges educational and community forums, and also works directly with victims of unfair treatment, discrimination and targeting. In addition, CAIR plays an important role in representing Muslim American perspectives in the media.

Mr. Carroll's lecture was entitled, "An Introduction to CAIR: Muslim American Advocacy in the Post 9/11 Era." The presentation began with an overview of Islam as a world religion and a history of Muslims in America. Students were surprised to learn

about the many theological connections uniting Islam and Christianity. They were also fascinated to discover little-known facts about the earliest presence of Muslims in America that are most often left out of mainstream retellings of American history. Some of these stories stretch the racial and ethnic associations normally linked to Muslim Americans. For example, reports indicate that there have been Native American Muslims for several centuries. Another interesting aspect of Muslim American history that Mr. Carroll included was information about Polish speaking Tatars who built a mosque in NY in 1926 that is still standing today.

Mr. Carroll moved from background and history to the contemporary era, with an analysis of the problems of discrimination, stereotyping and defamation that are currently confronting Muslims in America. He stressed the importance of groups like CAIR that are working to counteract discrimination against Muslims on local and national levels. The highlight of Mr. Carroll's talk may have been the detailed information, pictures and stories that he shared with us about the local grassroots projects and efforts that are ongoing at CAIR-Houston. These include the Houston chapter's Civil Rights Workshops and its Peace and Unity

Billboard Campaign, as pictured. According to Mustafa Carroll, the billboard campaign is "designed to promote mutual understanding and to highlight the contributions of American Muslims."

Other billboards will emphasize interfaith aspects of CAIR's mission. Mr. Carroll also provided us with information about the internship opportunities for college students available at CAIR, and several audience members expressed interest in pursuing this possibility for the future. <http://cairhouston.org/internship.htm>.

Mr. Carroll's lecture was organized by Professor Alisa Perkins for her AAS 310 class, which studies South Asian, Arab, and African American Muslim groups in comparative and historical perspective while exploring how 9/11 and the subsequent "war against terror" have impacted the status and position of Muslims in America. Mr. Carroll's visit productively complemented a unit that zeroed in on the power of activists, artists, and civic organizations to mediate the public image of Muslims in America and other minority communities.

Jessica Chan, a UT sophomore majoring in Asian American Studies and biology summed up the lecture experience this way:

I thought Mustafa Carroll gave a wonderful presentation and I learned a lot about Muslims in general and their religion. . . It made me realize that a lot of things that are said about Muslims and other minority groups are not always true and he was right that a lot of things do get tweaked along the way. His power point also tied very nicely with the class and helped me get a better understanding about the terms Islamophobia [fear of Muslims] and Islamophobe. . . It was good to know that there are people who are counteracting [these negative trends] and helping those who are targeted for being a certain race or religion.

Alisa Perkins was an Assistant Instructor for CAAS in Spring 2012. She will be a lecturer for CAAS in spring 2013 and will be teaching her course, "Muslims in America."

CAAS Speakers and Events (September 2011 – May 2012)



Graduates celebrate at GraduAsian 2012 (Photo copyright Quit Nguyen).

Book Talk with Dr. Junaid Rana

In September, CAAS, with the South Asia Institute and Department of Anthropology, organized a book talk with UT alumnus, Junaid Rana, associate professor of Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He discussed his book, *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora*, which highlights how transnational working classes from Pakistan are produced, constructed, and represented in the context of American empire and the recent global War on Terror.

Book Reading with National Book Award Finalist, Karen Tei Yamashita

CAAS, with support from the College of Liberal Arts, The Humanities Institute, Texas Exes Asian American Alumni Network and The MFA Program in English, invited Karen Tei Yamashita to read from her acclaimed novel, *I-Hotel*. The novel centers on an iconic site in Asian American history -- the International Hotel -- epicenter of the Yellow Power Movement. Yamashita's novel about the Asian American civil rights movement presents a kaleidoscope of the ideals and conflicts, experiments and personalities that characterized the emergence of Asian American identity, culture, and community in the turbulent 1960s.

"The Beautiful Generation," Talk by Dr. Thuy Linh N. Tu

Thuy Linh N. Tu, associate professor of Social

and Cultural Analysis at New York University, gave a talk in October about Asian Americans in the fashion industry. Tu uses interdisciplinary approaches to critique the fashion industry and the complex engagement of Asians—as designers, tropes, workers, icons—in the business and culture that emanates. The talk was cosponsored with American Studies and the School of Human Ecology.

"Of Prosthetics and Pageants,"

Talk by Dr. Mimi Thi Nguyen

In November, CAAS organized a talk with Mimi Thi Nguyen, assistant professor of Gender and Women's Studies and Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Nguyen discussed the controversial NGO Miss Landmine pageant in Cambodia and the biopolitics of beauty. The talk was cosponsored with American Studies, Center for Women and Gender Studies, and Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice.

"Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality and the Law in the North American West," Talk by Dr. Nayan Shah

In early February CAAS invited historian Nayan Shah, associate professor at University of California-San Diego, to present his new book entitled, *Stranger Intimacy*, which explores intimacies between global migrants and examines the intersections between capitalism, U.S. and Canada's treatment of immigrants, sexual citizenship and race in the early 20th

century. The event was made possible with support from the Gender and Sexuality Center, Institute for Historical Studies, and the South Asia Institute.

"Hypin' the Hep: Asian American Boobs on YouTube," Talk by Dr. Darrell Hamamoto

With support from the Department of Radio-Television-Film, CAAS organized a public lecture by Darrell Hamamoto, professor of Asian American Studies at the University of California-Davis. In his talk Professor Hamamoto discussed the racial politics surrounding the emergence of Asian American youth as YouTube celebrities and problematized their incorporation as "ethnic" comedic figures by the military-medical-industrial complex in the contemporary US.



National book award finalist, Karen Tei Yamashita, reads from her acclaimed novel, *I-Hotel* at the Texas Exes Alumni Center.

GraduAsian 2012

This May, the Asian Desi Pacific Islander American Collective, Texas Exes Asian Alumni Network, and the Center for Asian American Studies jointly hosted GraduAsian 2012. GraduAsian commemorates the many achievements of UT-Austin's graduating Asian/Asian American students with family and friends, in conjunction with the traditional Commencement, to honor the long tradition of cultural awareness at The University of Texas at Austin.

Mark your Calendars for CAAS Fall 2012 Events

September 6 - "Why Asian American Studies Matters Now" talk by Dr. George Lipsitz

September 20 - "Participatory Citizenship and Civic Engagement: Asian Immigrants in DFW" talk by Dr. Caroline B. Brettell

For more details on these events, visit
www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/aas

Alumni Notes



Melissa Nguyen (AAS '10), attends the CUNY Summer Institute in summer 2011. Nguyen is in the front row, second from left.

2004

Since graduating with her AAS and Government degrees **NEESHA DAVÉ** has built a career working in Texas Democratic politics. Over the last few years, she has split her time between serving as the Chief of Staff for a Democratic member of the Texas House of Representatives and working for a political consulting firm doing direct mail and communications for Democratic campaigns. Davé also worked for a progressive nonprofit advocacy group as their grassroots director. In 2007, she married her husband Jeff, who she met working in politics. In March of this year, their beautiful twins Norah and Eli were born, making them a very happy, if sleepless, family.



Neesha Davé (AAS '05) and her husband Jeff welcomed their twins, Norah and Eli in March 2012.

TANIA SHAHANI attended the University of New Mexico School of Law in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In the fall of 2010, she moved to

Santa Fe, where she practices law representing indigent clients as an Assistant Appellate Defender at the New Mexico Public Defender Department.

2005

After finishing his AAS degree, **TONY VO**, worked odd end jobs to fund his backpacking trip across Europe and Southeast Asia. One of his jobs was at a non-profit organization for children of abuse, which changed Vo's life goals. He subsequently started the masters program at UT Austin School of Social Work in 2008, focusing on grief and loss counseling and working with at-risk youth of color. He graduated in 2011 with his MSSW and is currently working at UT Austin's Multicultural Engagement Center as their outreach coordinator. He's also the staff advisor for two university-funded student groups on campus: Asian Desi Pacific Islander American Collective (APAC) and Queer People of Color and Allies (QPOCA). He hopes to have more travel plans in the near future.

2009

WILLIAM LIU is a Janitorial Inspector at C.I.E. Management Services. He's currently working towards applying to medical school.

2010

HANNA HUANG completed her Masters in Social Work program at the University of Southern California. She works for Foundation Communities, an affordable housing non-profit, as part of the Supportive Housing department in Austin, TX. As part of the Resident Services team and Passages Case Manager at Skyline Terrace, she connects residents to resources and tools to build self-sufficiency.

MELISSA NGUYEN recently moved to San Francisco, CA and is a freelance writer and editor. She is currently the blog editor at Hyphen Magazine.

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Did you graduate from The University of Texas in Asian American Studies? CAAS wants to hear from you!

Please send us an email at aasinfo@utlists.utexas.edu, with your contact information on where you are and what you're up to!

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Make your tax-deductible contribution to Asian American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. Our goal is to increase awareness of Asian American issues by facilitating multidisciplinary teaching and research enabling students to become active members of their community. Your support will allow our Center to develop new courses, provide scholarships for students, increase research opportunities, and sponsor university and public programs.

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